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Our Common-School Education.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF

THE NORTHEASTERN OHIO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

OUR

Common-School Education;

WITH A

DIGRESSION ON THE COLLEGE COURSE.

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BY B. A. HINSDALE, A. M.,
President of Hiram College.

PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE NORTH-EASTERN OHIO TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

This Paper was read before the North-Eastern Ohio Teachers' Association, at a meeting held in Cleveland, December 9, 1876. The Association unanimously requested its publication, and voted to make it the basis of future discussion. So much for its external history.

The Author disclaims having attempted, as his title may perhaps imply, a complete survey of our Common-School Education. He appears as a critic, and therefore omits many points that a complete view would include. He well knows that some of the features complained of, have their compensations. Nor does he claim that what he has said, is the last word. He has studied the subject with much care; he has spoken his strong convictions, and submits what he has written as an humble contribution to the discussion of important themes.

Since the Paper was read to the Association, it has been revised throughout. The Author has ventured to add, what only the great length of the Paper prevented him from reading at the Cleveland meeting, a few paragraphs on the woman question in the schools.

No one knows better than the Author that there are excellent rhetorical reasons for *not* admitting the long digression on the College Course. But as this topic runs parallel with his own proper one—more, as his own work lies rather in that field—he hopes the rhetorical reasons may be waived.

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OUR COMMON-SCHOOL EDUCATION.

The Common School is a modern thought. Antiquity gave a certain amount and kind of education to a few; the Middle Ages did the same for a still smaller number; but it was left for modern times to conceive the thought of popular education, and to provide the machinery for carrying it out. From what source or sources this thought sprung, by what spirit it was animated, when and by whom it was first conceived, by what stages and under what influences it has grown, how far and by what means it has been realized in different countries,—all these are important and deeply interesting questions, but they lie outside the field of the present discussion.

In no country has the Common School taken deeper root than in our own. We may not equal the foremost nations of the Old World in our liberal, technical, and art culture; but we yield to none of them in our devotion to popular elementary education. It has been well said: "Unquestionably the most distinctive characteristic of American education is the prevalence of popular primary schools throughout the vast territory of the United States." President Gilman, from whom the sentence is quoted, thus continues:

> "The system upon which they are organized is a growth and not a creation. It was not imported from any European country. Its germ was planted by the earliest colonists,—but the tree which has sprung from the germ would amaze the original planters. Its development is not due to the arguments of any philosopher or the wisdom of any legislator. It has been gradually influenced by the ecclesiastical, political, and social requirements of the country. Theoretically, it has many defects; practically, it is adapted to the circumstances of the land. No European country is likely to adopt it; the Americans will not abandon it. It is the pride of the people; the satisfaction of the poor man; and the protection of the rich man. Its influence in the promotion of intelligence and prosperity in the Northern and Eastern States has been rated so high, that every new State adopts it without question."*

* "Education in America, 1776—1876," the *North American Review*, Jan'y, 1876

In how many of the original States our system of common schools sprung up indigenously, at what time and under what conditions, I am not here concerned to inquire. Its first appearance is nowhere else so plainly marked as in Massachusetts; nor did it in any other State appear at so early a date. The original order of the General Court, long since become classic, bears date November 11, 1647, and reads thus:

"It is, therefore, ordered, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord has increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him to read and write, whose wages shall be paid either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint; provided, those that send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns. And it is further ordered, that when any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university; provided, that if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year, that every such town shall pay five pounds to the next school till they shall perform this order."

Without stopping to look into the early history of popular education in the old Middle States, much less in the Southern States, I may fairly call this classic statute the germ of the American school system. It contains in embryo all its essential features. They are thus described by President Gilman: "Local responsibility, state oversight, moderate charges or gratuitous instruction, provision for all and not for the poor alone; and a recognition of three harmonious grades,—the primary school, the grammar school, and the university." The common-school idea may have worked independently from other centers, and probably did; all the other States have not borrowed it from Massachusetts; but if Virginia be the mother of States and of statesmen, Massachusetts is the mother of schools.

This Massachusetts tree first overspread New England. In those States it became well rooted more than a century ago. While Connecticut was still a colony of Great Britain, her governor, in answer to the home government, said: "One-fourth the annual revenue of the colony is laid out in maintaining free schools for the education of our children." Hence, we should rather speak of the New England than the Massachusetts school system. When emigration to the West set in, the tide bore the school system along. Cuttings from the New England tree

were thickly planted in the region of the Great Lakes and in the valley of the Mississippi, as far south as the mouths of the Ohio and Missouri; they have been carried over the Rocky Mountains and planted on the Pacific Slope. President Dwight's description of the New England schools in 1803 is just as true at succeeding periods of the new communities of the West,—of Ohio and Michigan, of Illinois and Wisconsin, of Iowa and Minnesota, and onward as far as civilization has gone:

"A stranger traveling through New England marks with not a little surprise the multitude of school houses appearing everywhere at little distances. Familiarized as I am to the sight, they have excited no small interest in my mind; particularly as I was travelling through the settlements recently begun. Here, while the inhabitants were still living in log huts, they had not only erected school houses for their children, but had built them in a neat style, so as to throw an additional appearance of deformity over their own clumsy habitations. This attachment to education in New England is universal; and the situation of that hamlet must be bad indeed which, if it contain a sufficient number of children for a school, does not provide the necessary accommodations. In 1803 I found neat school houses in Colebrook and Stewart, bordering on the Canadian line."*

More recently the New England idea has been making considerable headway in quarters where New England ideas were not once welcome—the old Slave States. A Governor of Virginia once wrote: "I thank God there are no free schools and printing presses, and I hope we shall not have these hundred years." But that feeling is now rapidly yielding to the American spirit. The sentiment first formulated in Connecticut, "Our public schools must be cheap enough for the poorest, and good enough for the best," has become the distinct aim and purpose of three-fourths of the States and of the people of our Union.

In our Centennial year, our common schools constitute a highly complex and differentiated, a vast and powerful system. The machinery of this system is tens of thousands of school houses, thousands of libraries, vast illustrative apparatus, boards of directors and boards of examiners, Normal Schools and Institutes, reports and bureaus, commissioners and superintendents, and more than a quarter of a million of teachers. In the towns and cities, the system has taken on a form especially complex and costly. There are the primary, grammar, and high schools, with their grades, A, B, C, and D, not to mention the minor divisions which a layman can hardly keep in his head while hearing

* Quoted by President Gilman in *N. A. Review*, Jan., 1876.

them ; each one of which divisions is supposed to represent some definable stage in the training of a mind. There are the teachers of the various grades, from the primary teacher up by way of the principal to the Superintendent of Public Instruction and his staff of assistants. Behind these come trooping in the Kinter-garten teachers, the normal and training teachers, followed by the music-and drawing-masters—each one having his bundle of reports under his arm and his sheet of percentages in his hand. The whole body of public school teachers constitute an intelligent, active, and powerful profession ; presenting in some respects the appearance of an hierarchy of education. The statistics of the system are overwhelming. Here are some of the more striking, selected from the Report of the National Commissioner of Education, for 1874 :*

Estimated value of School Property	$165,753,447
Income of Schools	82,158,905
Paid for School sites, Buildings, and Furniture	15,045,908
Salaries of Teachers and Superintendents	47,628,068
Miscellaneous Expenditures	11,703,095
Total Expenditures	74,974,338
Permanent School Fund	75,251,008
Pupils enrolled in Schools	8,099,981
Average daily Attendance	4,521,564
Number of Teachers	241,300

In 1874 there were eighteen states and territories that expended for free education more than ten dollars *per capita* for the average attendance in the public schools ; ten that expended more than fifteen dollars *per capita*, and four that expended more than twenty dollars *per capita*. What is more, the expenditures are increasing with surprising rapidity. Says Mr. Francis Adams, Secretary of the National Education League for England :

"Throughout the Union the expenditure for school purposes was doubled during the ten years from 1850 to 1860, and almost trebled between 1860 and 1870. The amount raised by taxation in 1860 was two and a half times the amount raised in 1850 ; while the amount thus raised in 1870 was more than three times that of 1860. During the twenty years expiring in 1870 the population had increased about 70 *per cent.*, and the aggregate amount expended for education had increased to six times the sum raised in 1850. The school income derived from taxation is more than eight times as large. In 1850 the amount raised by taxation was less than one-half the entire amount, while in 1870 it was nearly two-thirds."†

* See pp. xiii—xxi.

† *Free Schools of the United States.* London, 1875, pp. 69, 70.

In all the schools supported by these funds, instruction is absolutely free ; the rate bill is no longer known in the United States. "If there is one question," says the writer just quoted, "upon which the citizens of the United States are practically unanimous, it is in support of free schools."

Nor does this widely-expanded system stand on the ground like a bundle of straw, liable to be thrown down by every passing breeze. Beginning with Massachusetts in 1780, it has firmly rooted itself in State constitutions and laws ; so that, in the majority of States, it is as deeply rooted as the system of penal institutions. It cannot be destroyed without rooting it out of the national heart, and also upheaving some of the foundation stones of our society. Well may thee volution of such a system have required more than two hundred years ! Well may an intelligent foreigner studying our life say :

"Those who have known America best and longest will agree that, whether the attachment of Americans for free schools is founded on good and solid reasons or otherwise, there cannot be the slightest doubt that it exists, and that it forms one of the most striking features in the national character."*

In view of the foregoing facts, what wonder that we should contemplate this great school system with a good deal of complacency ! What wonder that we should conclude that, in the best sense of the word, we are making rapid educational progress ! With few exceptions, the teachers and other school functionaries say we are ; and the great public acquiesces with the schoolmasters. With the exception of a few scarcely audible voices to the contrary, there is a want of either the inclination or the courage to say nay.

The arguments urged to prove real progress, in great degree are set forth in the sketch already drawn : the great increase in the number, and improvement in the kind, of school houses ; more and better school apparatus and furniture ; more teachers and higher wages. Did these premises legitimate the conclusions drawn from them, there would be no room for controversy ; for no one would dream of denying the facts. Probably it is true, though it has not been statistically proved, that the physical apparatus of education has kept pace with our material progress. But it will be noticed that the argument thus far rests on the mere husk of education and does not touch its kernel.

* Mr. Adams: *Free Schools of the United States*, p. 84.

No educator will think it conclusive, since there is no necessary, though there may be a probable, connection between the skeleton of a school system and its soul. Here we are liable to fall into a dangerous fallacy. One school system is not better than another simply because it covers more ground and costs more money. The worth of a college or university is not measured by the number of square yards of plastering on its walls; if it were, then many an American college would surpass the most famous universities of Germany. In the case of a college the essential questions are, "What are its traditions?" and "What is the quality of its instruction?" Nor do statistics of buildings, grounds, furniture, apparatus, libraries, and salaries necessarily reveal the real state of education in a country. Statistics of literacy and illiteracy go a good deal farther; but there is a good deal pertaining to education—some will say the largest and best part of it—that cannot be exhibited in columns of statistics and in graphic illustrations. This is no disparagement of educational statistics; they have their value; but, really, the difference between culture and the want of culture cannot be very well shown by the statistician and the map-drawer. It is difficult to weigh and measure spiritual qualities. To illustrate the argument, I cannot help quoting from the Report of the School Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the year 1875:

"As regards the material apparatus of education, all except the rudest shelter has been erected within and far within the century. There now stands on Brighton Street the one-story wooden building which in 1776 was the principal schoolhouse in Cambridge. Its former position was not far from the Washington Elm. In 1831 it was sold for eighty dollars, removed to its present site, and converted into a dwelling house. In that building, which can never have had an interior as attractive as that of a decent stable, flourished a succession of teachers, many of whom rose to the highest places in Church and State, while among their pupils were not a few whose reputation has been national or world-wide."

No, the most important conditions of education are not an excellent physical apparatus; they are competent and devoted teachers and eager pupils. A great teacher will make a great school almost anywhere, as Pestalozzi did in the old convent at Stanz, where, in the words of Quick, "his whole school apparatus consisted of himself and his pupils."

But the eulogists of the popular system do not rest the argument on its physical apparatus. They claim a great improvement in teachers, in books, and in methods. Generally they pass

lightly over the qualities of the teacher—fullness of knowledge, power to think, ability to stimulate thought, experience, weight of character, devotion to the work; but they make up for their reticence on this point by the stress they place on books and methods. Here is part of the Hon. George S. Hillard's commendatory notice of a popular school geography:

> "I envy the boys and girls who are to study Geography in this excellent compendium, and I look back with a sigh of regret upon the dry husks and innutritious chaff on which it was my lot to feed when I was a boy. The latest product of the Ames Plow Company is not more superior to the rude instruments described by Virgil in the Georgics, than is this treatise to that which I studied."

One who reads this glowing eulogy cannot help wondering whether Mr. Hillard's grandson really does make more progress with the new book than his grandfather did with the old one! Nor can he help reflecting that, some way, Mr. Hillard and others of his generation, despite the "dry husks" and "innutritious chaff" found in the old text-books, managed to prepare themselves very well for the work of the world.

The part that the "new methods" play in the current theories of education is something wonderful. Whatever else he may or may not have, each teacher has his kit of "methods." Sometimes, when he sees the emphasis placed on mere machinery, one is tempted to ask whether school houses, furniture, apparatus, books, and processes will not be so perfected by and by as to make education wholly mechanical, and to dispense with the wise teacher and eager pupil altogether. How we commiserate our fathers and mothers, as well as remoter ancestors, who lived and died before the "improvements" in education were made! If their training was as inferior to ours as their "opportunities" are assumed to fall below our opportunities, then we can allow them no more than a very rudimentary education; they were stammering readers and poor spellers, save perhaps in monosyllables, while in arithmetic they could make only simple calculations, and these mostly "in their heads"! Whether we *do* read and spell better than they did, whether we *do* calculate and reason better, whether we are better disciplined and make more out of life,—are questions rarely discussed on grounds of fact, but constantly assumed on grounds of theory.

Let us, then, boldly ask, Is the quality of our common-school education improving? Be it noted, the question

is not whether our school system has been greatly extended, whether more children enjoy its benefits, whether it costs more money, whether there are more and more learned teachers, or whether the physical apparatus has been greatly improved ; no one thinks of denying these propositions. Nor is it whether the common-school pupil of to-day is taught more things than the common-school pupil of fifty or a hundred years ago; for that question is as undeniable as the others. But the question is this : Whether we read and write, spell and cipher, better than our ancestors one, two, or three generations ago.

At the outset we encounter this difficulty—to find a common standard of measure. There are but two methods of procedure. One is, by means of historical testimony, written or traditional, to determine the attainments of former generations of pupils, and then to compare them with the attainments of this generation. Such testimony, especially in a written form, is meagre, not to speak of its vagueness and uncertainty. The other method is to take the opinions of those yet living who had, either by experience or tradition, immediate knowledge of the instruction formerly given in the schools. But here we meet that habit of mind which leads us, after we pass a given year-line, to disparage the present and to exalt the past. As a man grows older, provided he grows in culture, his standard of judgment grows with him. In the present case, he measures two generations of children, and does not notice that while he is doing so his *meter* changes in his hands. Perhaps a third method may be suggested,—to observe the training of those persons still living who were trained under the former order of things. But because the inquiry is difficult we should not shrink from it ; rather, using such methods as we have, let us essay the task.

In the first place, there is a considerable number of people who do not *see* that what the schoolmasters tell them is true. But the other day a lady forming one of a company where this question was raised — a lady of much more than ordinary intelligence and character—said : "All I can say about it is, my children are not as far along with their studies as I was with mine at their ages." A man has only to keep his ears open, at most, to provoke frequent conversations on this subject, to learn that the class who will give similar testimony is a large and respectable one. In fact, while it is the understanding that we have been

making great advances in the quality of our common education, and while it takes some courage to say nay, there is, unexpressed, a large amount of incredulity on this point, and a widespread dissatisfaction with the results of the popular system. Reference is here made chiefly to intelligent persons outside the teaching profession who do not make especial pretentions to culture. These persons may be wrong, but they are entitled to be heard.

In the second place, there is a class of highly cultured men, some of them educators, who do not join in the pæans to the prevalent system. On the contrary, they say the present results are inferior to the best results of a century ago. For example, the Report of the School Committee of Cambridge, Massachusetts, for 1875, in a comparison of these results, says:

"There is reason to believe that more and better work was done by our schools in the early days of the Republic than is accomplished now."

This Report was written by Dr. A. P. Peabody, of Harvard College. In an address delivered before the Massachusetts Convention of Teachers,* in January, 1876, Dr. Peabody returns to the subject, thus:

"The schools of former generations in New England (in most other parts of the country the common school is a very modern institution), though by any now recognized standard of comparison very far inferior to the present, did much more for their pupils than is done now."

He says the former condition of things, its merits as well as its demerits, has become obsolete; still he "believes it accomplished more for the fit education of the citizen than is effected under the present *regime.*" This testimony, given under the shadow of our oldest college, may be mistaken; but it cannot be whistled out of the way.

The difficulty of finding a common standard of measurement has already been remarked upon. Perhaps the best standard that occurs is the West Point examinations, particularly the examinations of candidates for admission to the Academy. Here is a large number of candidates each year; they come from all parts of the Union; they are of about the same age, one year with another; they are examined by experienced teachers, generally holding their places during good behavior. Fortunately, a rec-

* "The Relation of Public Schools to the Civil Government."—*The Unitarian Review*, July, 1876.

ord of these examinations has been kept for nearly forty years. The results have been tabulated and published. All educators, and especially common-school teachers, should be interested in the verdict that West Point has given on our common schools.

The Board of Visitors of the Academy for the year 1875, composed of army and navy officers, members of Congress, and citizens from private life, some of them well known educators, in their Report make these remarks:

"It is a very suggestive fact that in the last five years the average number of rejected candidates has been 6 *per cent.* for physical deficiency, and 40 *per cent.* for deficiency in the scholastic requirements. In the six New England States, where educational facilities are open to all, the rejections have been 35 *per cent.* of the number examined from that section. From these statistics it is clearly evident that in the schools of the country there is need of more thorough methods of instruction in the elementary branches."

The Report also contains the following memorandum from Professor Church, an experienced West Point teacher, and the author of well-known mathematical works:

"UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY,
"June 12, 1875.

"Referring to our conversation this morning, I have to say that from my experience in the examination of candidates for admission to the Military Academy, I am satisfied that there is somewhere a serious defect in the system of instruction, or in its application, in the schools of our country for education in the elementary branches, particularly in arithmetic, reading, and spelling. I think our candidates are not as thoroughly prepared as they were twenty years ago.

"Very respectfully yours,
"A. E. CHURCH, Prof."

Now, what have our public-school teachers to say to this? What do they propose to do with an old West Point examiner who charges a "serious defect" in their methods of teaching the elementary branches, "particularly arithmetic, reading, and spelling"? Evidently, Prof. Church should have his attention called to the educational statistics printed in the Census Reports and in the Reports of Commissioner Eaton. He ought, at least, to be compelled to attend an Institute, and to listen to some lectures on the "new methods."

But the West Point authorities furnish the evidence on which they base their indictment of the public schools. Part of it is found in the following*

* The columns headed "Appointment Cancelled," "Declined Appointment," and "Failed to Report," as not bearing on the present question, are omitted.

STATEMENT,

Showing the Number of Candidates for Cadetships appointed to the United States Military Academy, the Number Rejected, and the Number Admitted,

FROM 1838 TO 1874, INCLUSIVE.

YEAR.	No. APPOINTED.	REJECTED BY ACADEMIC BOARD.	*For Want of Qualification in—* Reading.	Writing.	Orthography.	Arithmetic.	Grammar.	Geography.	History.	REJECTED BY MEDICAL BOARD.	ADMITTED.	Of whom there GRADUATED four years thereafter—
1838	132	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	111	54, or 48.6 per cent.
1839	91	2	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	76	34, or 44.7 per cent.
1840	106	8	0	1	1	8	0	0	0	2	84	22, or 26.1 per cent.
1841	131	8	6	4	1	6	0	0	0	0	114	34, or 29.8 per cent.
1842	144	17	4	5	6	8	0	0	0	9	109	47, or 43.1 per cent.
1843	77	6	0	5	5	4	0	0	0	8	60	29, or 48.3 per cent.
1844	96	14	4	7	1	13	0	0	0	1	75	34, or 45.3 per cent.
1845	98	9	3	1	1	7	0	0	0	1	81	40, or 49.3 per cent.
1846	121	5	2	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	103	41, or 39.8 per cent.
1847	84	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	74	35, or 47.2 per cent.
1848	84	2	1	1	2	2	0	0	0	0	81	38, or 46.9 per cent.
1849	95	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	88	42, or 47.7 per cent.
1850	98	3	1	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	90	40, or 44.4 per cent.
1851	81	3	1	3	3	3	0	0	0	0	71	31, or 43.5 per cent.
1852	102	7	4	5	5	4	0	0	0	3	90	44, or 48.8 per cent.
1853	97	6	2	2	2	5	0	0	0	1	83	36, or 39.7 per cent.
1854	120	4	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	4	47 } 56 } 103	20, 4 yrs., or 42.5 p. ct. 22, 5 yrs., or 39.2 p. ct.
1855	99	7	4	6	6	2	0	0	0	7	80	37, 5 yrs., or 46.2 p. ct.
1856	101	17	2	5	12	6	0	0	0	4	72	44, 5 yrs., or 61.1 p. ct.
1857	132	26	8	19	18	13	0	0	0	9	82	32, or 39 per cent.
1858	108	19	6	12	11	13	0	0	0	4	75	24, or 32 per cent.
1859	91	26	8	24	24	8	0	0	0	0	60	20, or 33.3 per cent.
1860	84	12	4	7	7	7	0	0	0	0	72	27, or 37.5 per cent.
1861	148	13	3	4	4	10	0	0	0	2	107	63, or 58 8 per cent.
1862	96	11	1	8	7	4	0	0	0	0	81	38, or 46.9 per cent.
1863	126	9	4	6	6	6	0	0	0	3	99	58, or 58.5 per cent.
1864	101	15	4	11	11	9	0	0	0	0	73	46, or 63 per cent.
1865	101	16	8	13	12	12	0	0	0	4	74	36, or 48.6 per cent.
1866	95	17	7	9	9	13	0	0	0	1	70	45, or 64.2 per cent.
1867	84	19	2	15	10	8	8	7	9	1	55	33, or 60 per cent.
1868	127	34	8	12	12	16	25	15	19	3	76	53, or 72.5 per cent.
1869	112	24	5	13	13	9	17	13	13	7	70	40, or 59.1 per cent.
1870	163	73	15	30	30	28	54	42	40	4	65	37, or 56.9 per cent.
1871	131	32	3	10	10	15	24	15	22	11	76	43, or 56.57 per cent.
1872	165	35	0	19	19	11	17	18	15	20	95	
1873	230	74	5	28	28	30	50	49	29	13	118	
1874	175	66	4	25	25	30	46	36	19	4	89	

The following summary makes a striking impression :

In 1840,	out of	106	candidates,	8	failed in examination.
" 1850,	"	98	"	3	" "
" 1860,	"	84	"	12	" "
" 1870,	"	163	"	73	" "
" 1874,	"	175	"	66	" "

It should be noted, that, prior to 1866, the candidates were examined in reading, writing, orthography, and arithmetic, only; and that in 1866 grammar, geography, and history were added as additional requirements. This should be borne in mind in comparing the ratios of those rejected with those appointed, at different periods But, making due allowance for this element, the ratio is still alarming; eight to one hundred and six in 1840, and sixty-six to one hundred and seventy-five in 1874! But the proper way is, to compare those deficient in the same branches, as orthography and arithmetic, at different periods.

When these statistics were first brought to my attention, I wrote to Prof. Church, asking, especially, whether the examiners had not, perhaps unconsciously, raised the standard in the same branches, and whether the candidates were equal in other respects to those of twenty years ago. I thought it possible that the army had fewer attractions now than then for intelligent and enterprising boys. In a long letter, that he has kindly given me permission to use at my discretion, he says the subject has been one of serious thought to him for a long time; that for thirty-five years he has borne an active part in examining the West Point candidates, studying with interest and care their character and attainments; and that he can hardly be mistaken "with reference to the facts, though he may be with regard to the inferences." In reply to my two most pointed questions, he writes:

> "I do not think we have raised our standard of requirement in any one branch. As far as possible, we have endeavored to keep this the same from year to year, though we have lately been more strict in our preliminary examinations, and thus perhaps discover more deficiencies than we would under a less vigorous system. I should say that the opinion I have so emphatically expressed [as to the deterioration of the school training of candidates], is not founded alone upon the knowledge exhibited in these preliminary examinations, nor upon the increased number of failures, but as well upon the knowledge exhibited by those who have, after admission, come at once under my personal instruction."

Again:

> "I cannot say that I observe any difference in the class of candidates. The number of applications for the position increases, I am informed, from year to year; and appointments are made annually to fill nearly every vacancy in the different congressional districts and at large. They come, as ever heretofore, from every class of society in our land, from the rich and the poor, high and low."

He says further, "the thorough preparation of those who were about to enter upon our rather severe course, in the simple branches of arithmetic, reading, and writing, including orthography," "has with our Board been a matter of deep concern"; but that, notwithstanding all the attempts to improve such preparation by circulars calling the attention of candidates to existing defects, the tendency has been steadily downward. Attainments in the studies added in 1866 to the preliminary requirements, are below those in the old studies, but there is no tendency towards improvement. Even "the greater frequency of competitive examinations for the place" has not been followed by any marked change. At this stage of the discussion I quote only one further paragraph :

"I may instance the facts that the number rejected as poor readers, is now and always has been small; yet it is observable that the proportion of intelligent readers is much smaller than formerly. In spelling, the examination has always been strict, and, as near as we can make it, our standard the same; yet more are rejected and more ordinary spellers are found among those admitted. In arithmetic likewise, with the same standard of attainment, as far as my long experience can make it, while the proportion rejected has increased, I find as well in those admitted less accuracy in definitions and rules, less ability to give clear reasons, and less facility in the application of the principles whenever required in other branches of their mathematical course."

It may be objected to any conclusions based upon the West Point statistics, that there have been great social and political changes in the Southern States which naturally throw the appointments into inferior hands, and that the great increase in the number rejected at the Academy is thus to be explained. Prof. Church himself finds in this a partial explanation, for in his letter he mentions the "unorganized condition of the schools in some of the Southern States." But that this explanation is wholly inadequate, is clear from his statements given above. Such an explanation is also precluded by the fact stated by the Visitors, viz: "In the six New England States, where educational facilities are open to all, the rejection has been 35 *per cent.* of the number examined from that section." But most of all is it negatived by another table, "showing States from which were appointed candidates rejected by the Academic Board from 1838 to 1874, inclusive." In such States as Pennsylvania, Ohio, Massachusetts, Illinois, and New York the ratio of the admitted to the rejected has been rapidly increasing.

What is more, General W. T. Sherman, in an Address deliv-

ered early in the current year before the Washington University, St. Louis, gives the West Point view of the public schools his emphatic endorsement, in the following words:

"In these days when common schools have a strong hold on popular sympathy, it requires some courage to speak the truth; but I hold that all who are interested in this great subject of education are indebted to Prof. Church and to the Board of Visitors for this note of warning."

The evidence now presented is as much as can be digested at one sitting. Perhaps it is not sufficient to prove a deterioration in the common-school education of the country. Perhaps evidence to justify that assertion has not been accumulated or does not exist, but that presented is certainly deserving of grave consideration. It shows, at least, a considerable amount of dissatisfaction with the schools, and that this dissatisfaction is felt by persons of exceptional abilities and culture, as well as exceptional opportunities to get at the facts bearing on the present inquiry. Besides, it proves that our common-school education is not what it ought to be, and that our school system needs much criticism and revision. While I waive the further discussion of the question, whether we do read and spell better than our fathers and grandfathers, I avow the opinion that many of the tendencies of the prevalent system are wrong and need correction. What some of these tendencies are, will appear as I point out causes of the inferiority of our elementary instruction. In this task I shall draw freely from what Dr. Peabody* has written, and make a further very striking quotation from the letter of Prof. Church.

Dr. Peabody alleges a deterioration of the material upon which the schools have to work.

"Almost all the scholars" [in 1776], he says, "came from families, if not cultivated, yet intelligent, in which knowledge was respected, learning honored, and in which the reading of such books as were attainable was in all cases the Sunday habit, in many cases the daily habit, of the household. . . . There was hardly a house in which the Bible was not more or less read, on Sundays if at no other time; and apart from the religious uses of the Bible, it is impossible to over-estimate its educational worth in the vast spaces which its history covers, in the broad scope and the unequaled loftiness and grandeur of its literature and poetry, and in the numerous directions in which its very silence awakens curiosity, stimulates the imagination, quickens and energizes thought. Such study of the Bible as was simply normal in a New England farm-house of the last century was of itself sufficient to make a man, when he became of age, safe, sober, and trustworthy as a citizen."

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* I quote from both the Cambridge Report and the Address.

Describing the present state of things, the Doctor says :

"A very large proportion of the pupils in our cities and populous towns come from homes utterly destitute of culture, and of the means and the spirit of culture, where a book is never seen, and reading is with the adult members a lost art, or one never acquired. There are schools in which four-fifths, or more, of the pupils are of this class."

Dr. Peabody is certainly a competent witness to what has been going on in New England within the last half century. There can be no doubt that the material upon which her public schools work, is far inferior to what it was fifty or a hundred years ago ; nor can there be any doubt that the same process of deterioration, on the average, has been going on all over the country. It is perfectly idle to hold that the 38,115,641 citizens of the United States in 1870 presented as high an average of intelligence, of moral sobriety, of self control, as the 9,633,822 citizens of 1820. The dangerous social elements now are ten to one what they were then. A principal cause of this deterioration in the intellectual and moral character of our population, is, of course, the vast foreign emigration to our shores. Now, when one reflects how much the pupil's progress depends on his family and his home—on blood, on family traditions, on inherited culture—how much on the spirit and aspirations and habits of those immediately surrounding him, whether they are day by day wrestling with the problems of physical existence, or enjoying a competence, not to say wealth ; whether their minds run wholly in the channels of business and politics, or partly in the channels of books and culture ; whether, in a word, the home-life is one of grovelling, money-getting, social gaieties, and political excitement, or of study, reflection, and spiritual seriousness,—when one reflects how much the pupil's progress depends on these considerations, he cannot help agreeing with Dr. Peabody that, in the character of our school population, we have the principal cause of the inferiority of our common education.

In connection with the quality of the school material, in fact as a part of it, may be mentioned another of Dr. Peabody's points: "While a great deal more is said and written about education than formerly, the amount of time and energy devoted to it by those under instruction is very much less than it used to be." He makes two counts. *First,* the vacations—once hardly a week in the year, now three months at the least. But, *second,* he lays especial stress on the occupations of children out of school.

Once study at home was the constant rule; now, the infrequent exception. Once the school divided general attention only with the Church; now it receives small attention save from its official guardians. More than all, children are now, in a measure, absorbed in the distractions of business, of politics, and of social life. How little, relatively, can the teacher do for a pupil when the pupil eagerly reads the daily paper for exciting news, or when his mind is filled with the various forms of social dissipation! The thick geological strata were laid down in still waters; and the whirl and bustle and excitement incident to American life, and to which children are introduced all too soon, are not favorable to deep and rich accumulations of learning.

Leaving the material and approaching the school, Dr. Peabody complains of the rigid and tyrannous system of the graded schools. He says the former "inartificial method, or rather the absence of method," was well adapted to the social condition of New England a century or half a century ago. "There was no arbitrary or fixed arrangement of classes or plan of classification; but each scholar was virtually a class by himself, in some studies perhaps reciting alone, often out of school hours, in others associated with different companions according to his or her proficiency." Now all this is changed. In place of an inartificial method or no-method, we have an educational liturgy, each gospel, collect, psalm, and prayer attended by its appropriate rubric. Against the current formalism of teachers, he directs some of his hardest blows. He says he has "heard every member of a class of twenty obliged to repeat separately, 'one bean and two beans are three beans.'" Also, that he had listened to an object-lesson in which the teacher "spent several minutes in demonstrating, with a wonderful affluence of illustration, to children six or seven years old, that a horse had four legs and a child but two"! A friend of mine was once looking through the schools of a city very proud of its schools. In pointing out some noteworthy features of one of them, the Supervising Principal called attention to the fact that it required but three minutes after the bell struck to empty the building of its hundreds of occupants. As though the time consumed by a child in walking down stairs were an important feature of a school! Here we are dealing with every-day criticisms on the common schools, and it is proper to inquire how far they are just, and how far the features complained of can be removed.

First of all, we may as well understand that the prevalent system of schools, in its essential features, if we are to have common schools at all, is inevitable. The argument for the graded system is, in the main, the advantages offered by the principle of the division of labor, and it is irrefutable. We must accept the system as a man accepts his wife, "for better or worse." In the broadest sense President Gilman's words are true : "Theoretically, it has many defects ; practically, it is adapted to the circumstances of the land." Dr. Peabody admits that, for the towns and cities, the graded system is a necessity. We may go farther and say, it is, taking everything into account, a desideratum. If the educational labor of two centuries had been abortive, or if it had resulted in a monstrous progeny, we might well despair. But this is not saying that the system is as good as it can be made, or that the graded school is the best place for a man to put his bright boy or girl, if he happens to have a bright one. This latter question I do not discuss. But I do affirm that, if we are going to educate the vast armies of children found in the towns and cities especially, we must have a physical apparatus, a legal mechanism, and an organized force of teachers that are adequate to do the work. Sporadic and spontaneous movements are inadequate. Whatever the relative merits of the no-system method of fifty years ago and the all-system method of to-day, the former could no more do the work that now needs to be done than our military system in the war of 1812 would have answered the purposes of the nation in the late rebellion. But that this system has defects that are inherent and that can never be wholly eradicated, no thoughtful student of its theory and working, will dream of denying. Nor will such person think of affirming that, for the brightest and most promising children, whatever it may be for the dullard and the mediocre, the public school is an ideal place of education.

It cannot be denied, for example, that the graded-school system is exceedingly rigid and inelastic. Its tendency is to stretch all the pupils on the same bedstead. The public schools are common schools; they are for the common mind as well as for all the people. Children of all kinds and conditions are brought together in them ; those from homes where books are read and discussed and mental activity stimulated, and those from homes where books are never seen, and where all the surroundings are

stifling to intellectual life. Blood and training go for something in the exchange life; and it is absurd to suppose that the children of ignorant parents, foreign or domestic, are on a par with those of good families having generations of intelligence or culture behind them. Dr. Peabody speaks of a school once under his own supervision, where 99 *per cent.* of the children were of the former class, and of another school in the same city wholly made up of children of intelligent parents. And yet it is difficult, or rather, impossible, so to organize a system of public schools that these different kinds of children shall not be thrown together in the same schools and in the same classes. There are weighty objections to separating these children, that is, putting them in different schools; and if it could be done the tendency would be to equalize school and school, as it now is to equalize pupil and pupil. Then, the tendency of the graded schools is to sacrifice the brightest children to the dullards or to the mediocres. The dullest cannot be made to keep up with the brightest, when the latter are going at their normal pace; but the best can be made to go as slowly as the dullest. Or, if the ability of the dullard be not the standard of achievement, then it is the ability of the mediocre. In no case do or can the brightest minds have a fair chance. There has been much discussion of the subject of promotions, and no wonder, since the grievances of his best pupils must continually disturb the conscience of the intelligent teacher; but thus far there is no *consensus* of opinion, and there seems to be no possible method by which the best pupils can have all their rights. The graded-school system is thus an attempt to make equal the legs of the lame,—a thing that can never be done, since both Nature and Revelation declare them unequal.

Then there is the teacher's tendency to formalism and routine. Several years ago I discovered that an elaborate school ritual had been evolved, and I am therefore gratified to find Dr. Peabody speaking of a school "ritual and rubric." He says he has seen a "fourth part of the time given to a reading or spelling lesson occupied in meaningless evolutions and gestures performed by the scholars in the interval between leaving their seats and their resting in their final positions in front of the desk,"—as who has not? He also justly says the "school ritual and rubric" are "very serviceable as a directory for new and feeble teachers, but embarrassing to those who are amply quali-

fied to plan and manage their own work." Many minds are incapable of using forms without becoming their slaves. Perhaps it is not too much to say this is a tendency of our nature. Religious history is fruitful in illustrations. He is not an irreverent man who sings:

> "Where others worship I but look and long;
> For, though not recreant to my fathers' faith,
> Its forms to me are weariness, and most
> That drony vacuum of compulsory prayer,
> Still pumping phrases for the Ineffable,
> Though all the valves of memory gasp and wheeze.
> Words that have drawn transcendent meanings up
> From the best passion of all bygone time,
> Steeped through with tears of triumph and remorse,
> Sweet with all sainthood, cleansed in martyr-fires,
> Can they, so consecrate and so inspired,
> By repetition wane to vexing wind?"

"A great deal of the fresh life which Horace Mann infused into our schools is life no longer," says Dr. Peabody, "yet lingers on in a fossil state, petrifying, too, no less than petrified." I, for one, find it impossible to believe, for example, that Teachers' Institutes are as stimulating and inspiring to teachers as they were twenty years ago.

Again, under the present *regime* the teacher does not and cannot stand in the same relation to the individual pupil that he did under the old. Now he handles classes; then he handled pupils. The graded-school system is a system of platoons, companies, regiments, brigades, and the like, and thus far no means have been devised for removing its platoon features. As a result, the personal force of the teacher goes for less than it did before the platoon system. He is more of a schoolmaster and less of an educator. Consequently, while the pupil gets more than he did formerly from the physical apparatus of education, he gets less from the inspiration of the living teacher.

There can be no doubt, I think, that the old no-system plan was more favorable to the progress of the active pupil than the present all-system plan is; nor can it be doubted that it was much better adapted to developing individuality of character. The pupil's movements were unimpeded by arbitrary arrangements and by dull companions. He worked more alone, and he was compelled to lean much less on the teacher and the class and to rely more on himself. But, at the same time, there can

be no doubt that, for the whole army, the all-system is better. The old-fashioned partizan warfare of the French Wars and of the Revolution, or even of the Border to-day, developed in the soldier a personal intrepidity and a fertility of resource that regular warfare does not; but partizan warfare never creates an army, and hence is not adapted to great military operations.

The schools of New England a century or half century ago, with their irregular organization and want of method, undoubtedly presented a higher average of achievement for the time and money spent than our graded schools of to-day can show; but as a whole, they were much less imposing. What the partizan soldiers of the last century were to the Union army of this, that the old schools are to the new schools. The law of compensations holds here, as everywhere. You cannot have the greatest personal intrepidity and the best organization—the most individuality of character and the most imposing array of school children and schoolmasters. The question is, How shall we combine elements most wisely?

I have spoken of certain defects of the graded system as inherent, and as incapable of elimination. So they seem to me. But these defects exist in different degrees; in a *maximum* or in a *minimum*. The problem is to reduce them to a *minimum*—to make a system that must always be rigid and unyielding to a degree as elastic and pliable as possible. One of the great difficulties in the way of breaking up the platoon system is, want of teachers. When the public becomes willing to pay a teacher for taking charge of twenty-five children, the difficulties of the situation will become very considerably less. The troubles that partial differentiation has brought, fuller differentiation must cure.

An incisive journalist, in commenting on President Eliot's paper, "Wise and Unwise Economy in Schools,"* speaks of the averaging process carried on in the graded schools thus:

"Now, it is obvious that forcing all this heterogeneous mass into one vast school-house to be educated can only mean one thing—a dull uniformity of training and discipline, which will tend for the time being as much as possible to wipe out all individual differences, to destroy individual ambition, and to produce in the end, as Mr. Eliot says, an 'average product,' a sort of mental, moral, and physical mean standard, which has been obtained quite as much by

* *The Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1875.

stunting what is good in the children educated as by forcing work out of the dull. In fact, the general result is a good deal like the result in an army of a uniform drill. You can obtain out of very indifferent material a good average soldier, who will stand fire, fight with coolness, and obey orders ; and so you can in a gigantic school turn out a well-drilled scholar, who will pass an examination creditably, and who will be able to show a good record for industry ; but this is not education. What we want in education is the development, not the repression, of individuality at all points. *

Another criticism sometimes heard is, that the schools share the hurry and bustle of the age. General Sherman in his address puts it thus :

"Nearly all our common schools and other preparatory schools have of late years been tempted to hurry their pupils forward too fast ; have led them to natural philosophy and the higher mathematics before they were well grounded in the rudiments—reading, writing, arithmetic, and geography."

Prof. Church lays great stress on the same point :

"It is particularly noticeable that as a class they [the West Point candidates] have studied many more branches than formerly. We have ever required each candidate to name on some one of his examination papers every branch of study he has pursued, and the number thus received is far greater than formerly, many lists including a large portion of the branches of a collegiate course—the higher branches of mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry ; and it is not unusual to find many of the names of these branches misspelled, and the candidate grossly deficient in the elements of arithmetic and grammar. * * * Though my opportunities of personally examining either the systems or practical teaching in our common schools are very slight ; from careful inquiries of my own pupils and of others with whom I have been brought in contact, I must conclude that, in a very great degree, the fault lies in a want of thorough and long continued instruction in these very elementary branches.

"It cannot be doubted, I think, that the teachers in the schools, as a class, are much more learned than formerly. Our Normal Schools and the greater attention given to special preparation for teaching, as a profession, must have secured this desirable end, and we should naturally expect better results. But may it not be that, ambitious to lead their young pupils into the more interesting fields of knowledge which they themselves have acquired, and encouraged by parents who in this go-ahead age desire to see their children swiftly advanced to higher classes, they [teachers] soon tire of the hard labor and close attention absolutely necessary to train the minds of beginners in the logical reasoning required in arithmetic and grammar, and of the continued repetition and painstaking necessary to form a fine reader and speller ?

"In the days when I was familiar with the common schools of New England, our schoolmasters were required to teach a few elementary branches only. With these they were thoroughly familiar, as much so perhaps as the teachers of the present day with their many. They had more time to devote to each branch, and were only ambitious to turn out thorough scholars in a few things rather than smatterers in many. I fear we have not improved on this good old system."

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* *The Nation*, No. 517.

These paragraphs touch the very core of a great difficulty in common-school education—I mean its undue expansion. The causes of this I shall soon state, but here the point is this—when only elementary branches were taught in the schools—when the world moved slowly and the minds of children were not occupied with a thousand other things—when the school divided with the Church the extra-home life of the child, and both were supported by the home,—then there was time to ground children in the rudiments of learning. Now the public-school course contains more of the higher studies than the college course did then ; the child is hurried from book to book and from class to class ; the day is divided into minute portions, and frittered away in driblets ; the child's mind is crowded with subjects our grandfathers reserved for maturer people ; and who can wonder that the common-school pupil, if very broad, is very shallow ? The tendencies of the teacher bear him in the same direction. He is anxious to get his scholars out of the one-bean-and-two-beans-make-three-beans period, into the more inviting fields beyond. Thus, he who ought to be a brakeman turns stoker. Parents, gratified with what is called "the progress" of their children, hurry the chase after many studies and superficialty in all of them.

One of the causes of the undue expansion of the public-school studies has not yet been mentioned. How enormously knowledge has increased within fifty years ! New studies of the highest interest and value have sprung into existence with a leap. In one point of view, these studies aid the teacher; in another, they embarrass him. They constantly press for admission into the public-school course, and it is almost impossible to deny them admission. They greatly complicate the question whether teaching should be for discipline or for information ; and, when that question is decided, there remains the constantly increasing difficulty of making selections. One of the teacher's greatest troubles is what a Frenchman calls an *embarras de richesses.* An eager public, intent on making the public schools answer all the ordinary purposes of education, perplex him with their demands. What might be expected follows : many studies, small books, (witness the various "Fourteen Weeks" and "Twelve Weeks" series), insufficient time, and superficiality. How enviable the life of the pedagogue in the good old times, when American life

was so wondrously simple! He was expected to teach only a few things, but to teach them thoroughly. That done, he had the satisfaction of leaving behind him, not a multitude of half-made impressions, but a few well-gained acquisitions and a few well-defined habits of thought.

Here a discussion of college education, in so far as it ininvolves the feature last under discussion, will not be out of place. The public-school teachers are entitled to the consolation afforded by the fact, that the question of studies troubles college men quite as much as it troubles them. That this must be the fact, can best be shown by an outline sketch of college studies.

The modern College roots in the Middle Ages; it is an offshoot of the mediæval University, where, in the full sense, we find the first course of study. This was the "seven-pathed" course, divided into the *tres viæ*, or *trivium*, and the *quatuor viæ*, or *quadrivium*; the first embracing grammar, logic, and rhetoric, the second music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. This cycle of seven liberal arts and sciences, called by the Greeks *encyclopædia*, constituted the education of the higher class of citizens in antiquity, and was considered the full orb or circle of learning. Thus Quintilian: "*Orbis illa doctrinæ quam Græci ἐγκυκλοπαιδεία vocant.*" The schools of the Middle Ages accepted this list of studies from the hands of antiquity. They regarded it as something complete,—something that returned into itself like a circle,—something that bounded the field of liberal study. They signalized its completion by conferring on the student the Bachelor's degree. The Master's or Doctor's degree was conferred, not on those who had covered a broader field than the Bachelor, but on those who had cultivated that field more thoroughly. How this course was regarded, is shown by its Greek name *encyclopædia*. The scholastics called it *curriculum*, a word which means, *first*, a race-course, *second*, a finished career or life, and, *third*, the university course of study. This "seven-pathed" course has undergone great changes; studies have fallen out and studies have been introduced; but the idea that "the course" is invested with the quality of completeness, in some sense, has never fallen out of the minds of those who may be called systematic educators.

The first course of study, then, consisted of grammar, logic, rhetoric, music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy. But with

the revival of learning in the fifteenth century, the classical languages and literatures began to knock for admission at the doors of the universities. The demand was resisted by the scholastic custodians of culture. But the battle was unequal. Men had become weary of poring over the scholastic studies,—weary, to use a figure of Whately's, of vainly threshing over the same straw and winnowing the same chaff; and the new studies, with their wealth of new facts, thoughts, and images, won the day. The mathematical sciences soon won for themselves a larger place. Thus, the "seven-pathed" course was expanded. Soon the classical educators began to look upon the new course as the scholastics looked on the old one; it was complete and must not be disturbed. Innovations were resisted with a stubbornness that amounted to bigotry. Classicists now say the classics are "the best Manual of Humanity";* then they said they were the only manual. They now argue that classics rank *among* "the studies best fitted to prepare a man for the most efficient and successful discharge of public duty;"† then that no other studies would do this work. In one of his attacks on Oxford, Sidney Smith wrote: "A set of lectures upon political economy would be discouraged, probably despised, probably not permitted." ‡ What a conflict the new sciences of nature passed through before any of them found a resting place in the *curriculum!* But the field of knowledge was all the time widening; new studies in social science, in natural science, in mathematics, in history, in language, in art, in literature, were springing up every day. The classicists stubbornly asserted that that metaphysical entity named "the course" was theirs by right,—stubbornly asserted that its seal, the Bachelor's degree, was their peculiar property. But that the battle has been going against them, is shown by the fact that they have been compelled to recognize new courses of study, and to accept the modifier "classical" as descriptive of their own. But what have the colleges and universities done with the new studies? Some of them have been admitted into what we must now call the "classical course"; others have been put into the new courses of study organized to meet the demands of growing knowledge; and many more are still outside the range of college and university teaching. What wonder that college men

* Goldwin Smith. † Pres't Porter, Yale College. ‡ *Edinburgh Review*, 1809.

should be bewildered and not know which way to turn! How great a change has passed over the world since the day when copies of only four of the Latin classics were found in the University library at Paris, and since Roger Bacon wrote:

"The scientific works of Aristotle, of Avicenna, of Seneca, of Cicero and other ancients cannot be had without great cost; their principal works have not been translated into Latin, and copies of others are not to be found in ordinary libraries or elsewhere. The admirable books of *Cicero de Republica* are not to be found anywhere, so far as I can hear, though I have made anxious inquiry for them in different parts of the world, and by various messengers. I could never find the works of Seneca, though I made diligent search for them during twenty years and more. And so it is with many more most useful books connected with the science of morals."*

The enormous growth of knowledge since the days of Friar Bacon has destroyed the very possibility of "a course" in the scholastic or old-classical sense of the word.

Historically, the American college is an offshoot of the English university. The idea of "a course" and the course itself were thus received. In fact, the idea took on a more highly crystallized form here than it had in Europe. The class system was differentiated. Four years, it was concluded, were sufficient for a properly prepared student to finish the course of liberal study. These years were called "Freshman," "Sophomore," "Junior," and "Senior;" two of these names being made by adapting current English words to a new meaning, the other two by borrowing and adapting cant terms from the University of Cambridge †

In the words of Prof. Beers:

"The course of study pursued at old Yale, as at old Harvard, was based on the ancient scholastic *curriculum* of the English universities, the back-bone of which was theology. By 1700 Oxford and Cambridge had added to this somewhat of science and elegant scholarship." ‡

"The first American Colleges," says President Porter, "were also primarily founded as training schools for the clergy, but as the other professions came to require a liberal culture, this special reference to the clerical profession was laid aside." § The ecclesiastical parentage of Harvard is shown by the legend on its seal, *Christo et Ecclesiæ*,—"To Christ and the Church." For

* Green's *Short History of the English People*, Harper & Bro., p. 162.

† See Prof. C. A. Goodrich's note on "Sophomore" in Webster's Dictionary.

‡ *Scribner's Monthly*, "Yale College," April, 1876.

§ *The American Colleges*, p. 73.

a long time the American course of college study was meagre, and much of the instruction very inferior. George Ticknor, one of the most cultured scholars our country has produced, at the age of ten years received from President Wheelock, of Dartmouth, a certificate of admission into that institution. Mr. Ticknor says: "I only remember that he examined me in Cicero's orations and the Greek Testament." He says "the whole thing was a form, perhaps a farce." Young Ticknor entered Dartmouth at the age of fourteen, and graduated two years later. Edward Everett graduated from Harvard at the age of seventeen. Ticknor says of himself, that "he was idle in college and learnt little." But Dartmouth was then a small school in the woods, and the discipline was no doubt better at the older seats of learning. The literary poverty of the country at that time is forcibly illustrated by a further incident in the life of Mr. Ticknor. After much consultation and thought, it was decided that he should go to Germany to study. He found it almost impossible to get even the most general information concerning the German universities. He learned something from Madame De Staël, something more from Villers, and was especially astounded by an account of the library of Göttingen, received at second or third hand from an Englishman. He says: "I was sure I should like to study at such a university, but it was in vain that I endeavored to get further knowledge upon the subject. I would gladly have prepared for it by learning the language I should have to use there, but there was no one to teach me." To us it seems almost incredible that there was no one in Boston in 1814 who could teach German, but such was the fact. The matter was got along with in this way: A Dr. Brosius residing at Jamaica Plains, a native of Strasburg, undertook to teach the eager pupil the language, though warning him that his pronunciation was that of Alsace. A French-German grammar (an English-German being out of the question) was borrowed from Mr. Everett, and young Ticknor sent to New Hampshire, where he knew there was a German dictionary and procured it, while a "Werther" was borrowed from the stock of books left behind him by John Quincy Adams, then in Europe.* No facts known

* *The Life, and Letters, and Journals of George Ticknor*, J. R. Osgood & Co., 1866, pp. 11, 14, 26.

to me throw a more curious light on the conditions of culture in the United States in the first quarter of this century!

One of the most interesting educational documents published within the year is the "Historical Sketch of Union College," prepared in compliance with an invitation from the Commissioners of the Bureau of Education, representing the Department of the Interior, in matters relating to the National Centennial of 1876, printed at the Government Printing House, Washington. One of the most interesting parts of this sketch is the view of the "Classical Course of Study in Union College at Different Periods." The periods are nearly decennial, reaching from 1802 to 1875. The following exhibit brings the two extremes together:

FRESHMAN YEAR.

1802.

"The Freshman Class shall study the Latin, Greek and English Languages, Arithmetic, Sheridan's Lectures on Elocution, and shall write such Latin Exercises as the Faculty may appoint."

1875.

FIRST TERM. — Livy. Xenophon; Homer. Algebra (continued) to "Series." Greek Prose Composition. Latin Prose Composition.

SECOND TERM. — Horace. Xenophon; Homer; Herodotus. Algebra completed. Greek Prose Composition. Latin Prose Composition.

THIRD TERM.—Cicero de Senectute and de Amicitia. Xenophon; Herodotus; Euripides. Geometry—Books VI to IX. Trigonometry. Rhetoric, with Composition and Declamation. Greek Prose Composition. Latin Prose Composition.

SOPHOMORE YEAR.

1802.

"The Sophomore Class shall study Geography, Algebra, Vulgar and Decimal Fractions, the Extraction of Roots, Conic Sections, Euclid's Elements, Trigonometry, Surveying, Mensuration of Heights and Distances, Navigation, Logic, Blair's Lectures, and such parts of eminent authors in the learned Languages as the Officers in College shall prescribe."

1875.

FIRST TERM.—Tacitus. Euripides; Æschylus. History of the United States. Rhetoric—Art of Discourse. Review of Freshman Mathematics.

SECOND TERM.—Juvenal and Terrence. Euripides; Æschylus. Conic Sections. Logic.

THIRD TERM—Horace—Satires and Epistles. Euripides; Sophocles; Plato. Statics and Dynamics. Study of Man. Botany (voluntary). History.

JUNIOR YEAR.

1802.

"The Junior Class shall study the Elements of Criticism, Astronomy, Natural and Moral Philosophy, and shall perform such exercises in the higher branches of the Mathematics s the Faculty shall prescribe."

1875.

FIRST TERM. — Cicero — Tusculan Disputations. Sophocles; Æschylus Thucydides. Mechanical Work—Hydrostatics, Hydrodynamics, Pneumatics. Elocution. Political Economy.

SECOND TERM.—Lucretius or Quintilian. Plato; Demosthenes. Elocution. Heat; Steam-Engine; Electricity; Meteorology. Physiology. Ethics.

THIRD TERM.—Acoustics; Magnetism; Galvanism; Electro-Magnetism. Chemistry. History of Civilization. Zoology. Botany.

SENIOR YEAR.

1802.

"The Senior Class shall study select portions of Ancient and Modern History, such parts of Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding as the President shall direct, Stewart's Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, and shall review the principal studies of the preceding years, and also such portions of Virgil, Cicero and Horace as the President shall direct, and shall be accustomed to apply the principles of criticism."

1875.

FIRST TERM.—Optics; Wave Theory of Light and Radiant Heat. Mental Philosophy. Lectures on Greek Philosophy. Geology. Plato contra Athens (voluntary). Applied Chemistry. Chemical Laboratory Exercises.

SECOND TERM.—Astronomy. Ethics. Christian Evidences. Lectures on Greek Philosophy and Poetry. Aristophanes—Birds or Clouds (voluntary). Hebrew (voluntary). English Literature. Lectures on the Bible. Comparative Philology.

THIRD TERM. — Christian Ethics. International Law and Constitution of the United States. Lectures on English Poetry. Lectures on English Literature. Lectures on Biblical Literature. Lectures on Greek Poetry. Lectures on Art. Lectures on History. Mineralogy (voluntary).

It will be seen that the second column is more crowded than the first, partly because the analysis is more minute, but principally because new studies have been introduced. Nothing will more clearly show the increasing demands made by the lengthened *curriculum* on both college students and college instructors.

No doubt the instruction given at Union has considerably improved since 1802, but we cannot suppose that it has improved in depth as much as in breadth.

Now the college boy of 1802, with his Latin and Greek and mathematics, if he had a competent instructor, had an opportunity to learn a few things well.* Whether he did, I do not inquire. But it is certain that much of the college work now done is exceedingly superficial. Glancing at the time given to such studies as psychology, logic, English literature, not to mention many others, it is clear that it must be so. It is true, the time of preparation has been lengthened; that students on the average are older than they were in the college days of George Ticknor and Edward Everett, and therefore able to do more work; but the time is still too short. It is hardly an exaggeration to say, that the studies now crowded into a single term require two. As a result, the hurry and rush of college life now contrast strangely with the leisure and composure of the olden time.

What, then, do the interests of the higher education require? Plainly that fewer studies shall be attempted. This seems the only practical alternative to increasing shallowness. College educators must not be tyrannized over by the idea of "a course." In its old sense, that became impracticable when knowledge passed so far beyond its old bounds. A "course," in the sense that the "three" and the "seven" were a course, would now require the days of Methuselah. There may be a list of studies more or less judiciously selected; this may be made nearly uniform in different colleges, so far as the amount and quality of the work is concerned; the Bachelor's degree may be sacredly kept to mark the completion of these studies; but this list is something different from the old *curriculum*. Nor has the word "university" preserved its former meaning. In

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* A writer in the New York *Evening Post*, the last summer, took pains to poin out in an interesting article that "There were in the Continental Congress during its existence 350 members. Of those, 118, or about one-third of the whole, were graduates from colleges. * * * Fifty-six delegates signed the Declaration of Independence. Of these, 28, or just one-half, were college graduates." A look at the courses of study in which these men graduated would be interesting. But there can be no doubt that the Continental Congress represented the highest culture of that day much better than the present Congress represents the culture of to-day.

the classical sense, the word carries the idea of completeness. It was given to a school when it embraced, according to the prevalent ideas, all liberal studies,—now a plain impossibility. When Mr. Erza Cornell wrote, "I would found an institution where any person can find instruction in any study," he expressed a very exalted but wholly impracticable ideal. In adopting the words as a legend, the authorities of the university that Mr. Cornell founded cannot look forward to their realization.

Perhaps it is not going too far to say that, in the future, the men of broadest culture must be specialists. Says Mr. F. B. Perkins:

"Four centuries ago, in the early days of printing, a popular encyclopædia, or the book that then stood for such, instead of being twenty-one quarto volumes, like the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, or even ten large octavos, like Chambers's *Cyclopædia*, was one small quarto volume, with not so great an extent of reading in it as the Old Testament. And there was then really nothing so very absurd in a man's professing all that was known. There is a well known Latin phrase of the period that describes such a man: *qui tria, qui septem, qui omne scibile novit*, i. e., 'who knows the three, the seven, in short all that there is know.'"

But now, to quote Prof. Wm. Matthews:

"The day of encyclopædic scholarship has gone by. Even that ill-defined creature, 'a well informed man,' is becoming every year more and more rare; but the Huets, and the Scaligers, the Bacons, 'who take all knowledge to be their province,' and the Liebnitzes, 'who presume to drive all the sciences abreast,' must soon become as extinct as the megatherium or the ichthyosaurus." *

Some studies are indispensable to culture, but too many wholly prevent it. In the words of the last writer, "A mill will not go if there is too little water, but it will be as effectually stopped if there be too much."

The argument for limiting, and even reducing, the number of studies in the college course is just as strong, and even stronger, when applied to the common schools. The proposition to skim a considerable part of the field of knowledge in these schools must be dismissed as at war with their genius, and as fatal to thorough instruction. It may be wise or foolish to go on calling them "the people's colleges," but it will certainly be foolish if the name fosters the opinion that they are or can be made colleges in reality. By limiting the field of teaching, the present minute division of time can be prevented; and there will then

* *Public Libraries of the United States*, published by the National Bureau of Education, articles, "Professorships of Books and Reading," pp. 233, 244.

be an opportunity for the faithful public-school teacher to ground his pupils in the elementary branches of learning.

Here it is pertinent to inquire whether the graded schools are not in some degree missing the real point. Some statistics well known to Cleveland teachers will illustrate my question.

In the year 1875, according to Superintendent Rickoff's Report for that year, there were enrolled in the Cleveland schools 19,705 pupils. Of these 15,333 were in the primary grades ; 4,372 in the grammar grades; and 615 in the higher grades. More minutely, these students were distributed as follows :

First Year	6,236	Eighth Year	444
Second "	3,588	Ninth "	272
Third "	3,109	Tenth "	160
Fourth "	2,373	Eleventh "	93
Fifth "	1,658	Twelfth "	40
Sixth "	1,007	Normal School	50
Seventh "	648		

Rejecting the Normal School pupils, only one pupil in thirty-five is in the High School.

In other cities the figures run much the same way, though in the East, especially in Boston, the pupils in the higher grades are relatively considerably more.

Now, it would be interesting to know two things : *First*, what proportion of pupils in towns and cities enter the high school ? *second*, how long the average pupil attends school ? Superintendent Rickoff's tables do not answer either question for Cleveland, though they warrant approximations. It seems clear that the average attendance of the Cleveland pupil does not reach much beyond five years. My question, then, is this : What influence this fact should have, if any, on the organization of the City schools, especially on the course of study ? One thing the above figures certainly do—they demonstrate that the great work of the public schools is, and must be, to teach the elementary branches. If they turn out poor readers and spellers, poor grammarians and arithmeticians, by the thousand, it is small consolation to know that they send a few boys to college well prepared. City boards and teachers must all the while have their eyes on the pupil who attends the *average* time I strike no blow at the higher grades. All I say is, the studies of the lower grades must not be chosen from a high-school point of view. If the two points of view are only one, very well. It is

vain to reply that all the pupils have access to the higher grades. In a city or town of given elements, intellectual, industrial, social, and moral, the average pupil *will* go to school about so long. It is the especial mission of the public schools to give *that* pupil the best training he can have in the given time.

Thus far nothing has been said of the qualifications of teachers as a part of the common-school problem, except in the single feature of the enslavement of many of them to routine. Nor shall I here touch this question, save in a single feature.

No change in our public-school economy is more striking than the general, in fact almost universal, substitution of women for men as teachers. It is admitted that, as an element in the woman question, the change is to be welcomed; but how it is as a part of the school question can hardly be said to have caused discussion. Female teachers are commended to boards of education and to tax-payers by their cheapness; they are sometimes commended to Superintendents by the fact that they are more pliable and manageable than men. It is admitted, too, that women make excellent teachers—for some kinds of work, better than men. In fact, the ability of the American woman as a teacher, has attracted the attention of intelligent foreigners who come here to study our system. Bishop Fraser says Americans generally have "a much greater natural aptitude for the work of a teacher," than Englishmen, "and particularly the American women." These also are the Bishop's words:

> "They certainly have the gift of turning what they do know to the best account; they are self-possessed, energetic, fearless; they are admirable disciplinaries, firm without severity, patient without weakness; their manner of teaching is lively and fertile in illustrations; classes are not likely to fall asleep in their hands."

The Bishop recognizes some defects, but says "they are proud of their position," "fired with a laudable ambition to maintain the credit of their school," "a very fine and capable body of workers in a noble cause."* All of this is worthily said, and is well deserved. But President Eliot has pointed out that women are not so likely to succeed in the higher walks of teaching as men, from two facts: that marriage generally puts an end to their period of service, and that they have not the physical endurance of men. Hence he argues that the general employment of

* Quoted by Mr. Adams, *Free Schools of the United States*, p. 194.

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women as teachers leads to frequent changes in the schools. This is his language :

"The employment of women in the schools in the enormous proportion in which they are now employed in many towns and cities, is an unwise economy, because it inevitably tends, first, to make the body of teachers a changing, fluctuating body, fast thinned and fast recruited; and secondly, to make teaching not a life work, as it ought to be, but a temporary resort on the way to another mode of life." *

Mr. Francis Adams confirms this view with some statistics drawn from English experience :

"In England scarcely one in twenty of the female teachers reaches her tenth year of service. Of the female teachers trained at Bishop's Stortford, it has been ascertained that the average school life was under five years." †

Both the premises and the inference drawn from them seem undeniable.‡ Mr. Adams uses the language of moderation when he says :

"Female teachers may have other advantages over males, and in the United States are generally considered to have, but the length of the school life is not one of them."

I would respectfully urge the following considerations. A woman is not a man. The question of her inferiority or superiority to man, is not here in controversy. Superior or inferior, she is a woman. To raise here the question of the relative standing of the sexes in the scale of being, is an impertinence. Who asks whether a painting is a finer work of art than a statue or a temple? Who asks even whether Angelo or Raphael is the greater artist? The two cannot, on the whole, be compared. They are different. Now, men make excellent teachers, and so do women; but the one is not the other. The ideal male teacher has some qualities that the ideal female teacher has not; and *vice versa.* What these qualities are, need not at the close of this long paper be

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* Wise and Unwise Economy in Schools.

† Pp. 177-8.

‡ Mr. T. W. Higginson, in *The Journal of Education*, attempts to turn this position: "I have had no leisure," he says, "though I have tried to find it, to carry this investigation further than my own residence, but of the permanent teachers employed by the City of Newport for 1875-6, the 35 women have had a collective term of service in this city of 282 years—giving an average of 8.06 years; and the men, now six in number, show a collective service of 25 years, and an average of 4.23 years." Hence he suspects that President Eliot's argument rests on mere guess-work. But an inductive inquiry must have a broader basis than this, and must include cities where marriageable women do not so abound as they do in New England.

specified. The fact is admitted. The inference is just this: in education, the young mind should be brought into contact with both masculine and feminine qualities. I do not say the places should be equally distributed between the sexes; so far from that, I am willing that the women shall be in a decided majority, and do not think the schools would suffer in consequence; but I do say the masculine and feminine forces should be represented in their full power. Now, it is well known that often in a group of schools containing from one to three thousand children, you will find only one man employed, and he the Superintendent who does little or no teaching. Even in Cleveland, with an average monthly enrolment of 16,079 pupils, and 351 teachers on the roll, only 27 are males, including Superintendents and special teachers. Now, if there be any force in the position that the peculiar qualities of both men and women should be blended in education, must it not be confessed that the substitution of women for men in the public schools has gone too far? Sentiment to the contrary, I must avow that as my own opinion.

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